

Greenprint *for* King County

By:



For:



King County

Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Water and Land Resources Division

Prepared By:

Jones & Jones
Point Wilson Group
The Trust for Public Land

March 2005

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Department of Natural Resources and Parks

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Executive Summary

Introduction

For over 40 years, the King County region has aggressively pursued land conservation in a forward thinking manner, as evidenced by the Farmlands Preservation Program's protection of over 13,000 acres of productive farmlands, the creation of over 100 miles of regional trails, Water Ways 2000 protection of significant water resources, and the preservation of over 96,000 acres of forests. A variety of methods were used to achieve this protected network of open space and resource lands, including publicly voted bonds, dedicated revenues such as Conservation Futures Tax, transfer or purchase of development rights and other creative means.

To address recent pressing resource conservation issues, such as: species becoming listed under the Endangered Species Act; population increases; Growth Management Act requirements to reduce sprawl; and global warming induced climate change in the Pacific Northwest, the County needs a comprehensive land conservation strategy, encompassing all of these programs. At the same time, the County's financial resources have become increasingly constrained. Directing those limited resources towards the highest land conservation strategies has never been more essential. The *Greenprint for King County* is intended to do that, and to state the case for increasing the financial capacity to conserve critical lands.

Priorities

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) is the logical entity to address regional natural and open space land acquisition priorities that are at a scale that cannot adequately be addressed by local municipalities, state or federal agencies. King County's role as regional service provider is consistent with the Growth Management Act, which stresses the value of a regional system of open space and resource lands, which connect and contribute to the local open space systems established by cities throughout the county.

The Greenprint for King County, a recently completed Trust for Public Lands and King County initiative, identified the following regionally significant acquisition and conservation priorities for King County:

- The Forests of the Cascade Foothills
- Farmland
- River Corridors and Lakes
- Puget Sound Shoreline
- Regional Trails Connections
- Open Space Protection to Maintain the Urban Growth Boundary

Conservation Vision

The Greenprint for King County reflects a conservation vision, shared by communities throughout King County. As part of developing the Greenprint for King County, in 2004, the Trust for Public Lands met with King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks staff,

cities, state agencies, conservation organizations, and key political and community leaders. A regional conservation vision emerged that reflects a core set of shared conservation values:

1. *Ecological Health:* The ecological health of King County and the Pacific Northwest is of paramount concern to the majority of the region's citizens and decision-makers. Future growth will increase pressure on the county's land, water, and air resources. The vision for King County's future should continue to focus on protecting natural areas that are important to water quality, salmon habitat, healthy forests, and floodplains. A conservation vision that is grounded in current information, strong partnerships, and a commitment to focusing limited resources in high conservation value areas will improve the county's ability to protect the ecological health of the land for communities today and in the future.
2. *Cultural and Economic Values:* Communities also value land of historic significance and land that supports trails, parks, viewpoints, working farms and forests, fairgrounds, and regional recreation complexes. All these special places are part of the local and regional culture that is shared between generations. And working forests and farms continue to be important to the local economy in many King County communities. For many conservation professionals in King County, these values may play a secondary role in land acquisition/preservation decisions, but the values are still extraordinarily important to many elected officials and large segments of the community.
3. *Connectivity:* The whole is a sum of its parts. The value of individual open space and resource land properties is dramatically enhanced when it is part of an interconnected system of trails, parks, greenways, farmland, forests, shorelines, and lands around lakes, rivers, and streams. Connecting parks and trails enhances their value for recreation; wildlife species benefits when core habitat areas are connected; and connections between working farms and forests enhance their economic value.

New Analytic Tools

A powerful geographic information systems (GIS) model was created to inform the development of the *Greenprint for King County*. This GIS model evaluates existing conservation values across the county landscape according to six King County program areas: ecological lands, farm, forest, flood protection, regional trails, and marine shorelines. All maps and statistics contained within the *Greenprint for King County* reflect a January 2005 GIS model run. It is possible to adjust the GIS model and incorporate different data sets and criteria weights as regional priorities, policies, and information emerges. King County DNRP continues to use this dynamic analytical tool to ensure that limited resources are directed to the highest value lands, so the county can continue to fulfill its mission to be the regional steward of the environment while strengthening sustainable communities.

Figure 1. Conservation Vision: Regional Conservation Priorities

Chapter 1: Conservation in King County

Why Undertake an Open Space and Resource Lands Acquisition Strategy?

King County generally, and the Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) in particular, has been challenged to provide for the open space and resource lands needs of the public in an era of limited budgets. Undertaking the development of an open space and resource lands acquisition strategy addresses this challenge by endeavoring to:

1. Gain a better understanding of the physical landscape and natural resource conservation needs;
2. Ensure that limited resources are directed to the highest priority lands; and
3. Provide direction for competing demands from individual programs for limited funds.

Individual programs are in place at DNRP to prevent flood damage; preserve farms and working forests; acquire parks and trail corridors; assure water quality; save shoreline access; provide a mitigation land bank; and protect fish and wildlife habitat. Given the significant fiscal challenges confronting King County, it clearly is in the interest of the county to assure itself and its constituents that the various land acquisition programs are appropriately coordinated and prioritized. A need exists for a cross-programmatic acquisition strategy to coordinate, integrate and prioritize land acquisition plans within DNRP. Such a strategy will assist in the identification and evaluation of the highest priority acquisitions for the limited funds available.

In the summer of 2003, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) proposed to incorporate a land acquisition strategy for King County into its Greenprint for Puget Sound. TPL is working with governments, cities, non-profit organizations, foundations and landowners to develop a land conservation strategy in a twelve county area comprising the Puget Sound watershed with the goal of integrating improved public access to the shoreline with efforts to protect and restore the Sound's near shore habitat. This undertaking in Puget Sound will employ TPL's regional and national expertise to complete the following steps in the Greenprinting process: 1) define a shared conservation vision, 2) secure conservation funds, and then 3) acquire park and conservation lands.

TPL's scope of work on the *Greenprint for King County* pertained to the land acquisition and conservation programs of the Water and Land Resource and Parks Divisions of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP). The four-part scope included (1) formulating an inventory of existing parks, open space, and resource lands (working farms and forests);¹ (2) defining a conservation vision for King County; (3) developing strategies to

¹ The following parks, open space, and resource lands definitions guided the development of the *Greenprint for King County*, as well as the production of this report:

Parks: Public lands designated as parks for a broad range of uses, from passive parks without facilities to active recreation parks such as ball fields. King County DNRP's acquisition and stewardship of parks is primarily focused on regional trails, passive parks, and natural areas in more rural regions of the county, and not active recreation parks.

help guide future park and open space acquisitions; and (4) then providing recommendations on implementation. TPL and a team of consultants from the Point Wilson Group and Jones & Jones landscape architects conducted an array of analysis to complete the scope of work, including:

- Compiling a map inventory of existing parks, open space, and resource lands,
- Engaging cities, agencies, elected officials and nonprofit organizations in a series of outreach discussions,
- Identifying high value regions of the county for conservation using GIS models, and,
- Undertaking a Conservation Finance Study to evaluate current funding sources and additional capacity for funding conservation acquisitions.

The product of this analysis is the *Greenprint for King County*, intended to provide strategic guidance regarding land acquisition and conservation for King County program staff, managers, the County Executive, Council Members and other elected officials.

King County Public Land

King County has a tremendous network of parks, open space, and resource lands (Table 1). In addition to providing recreational opportunities, this network supports a wide variety of conservation objectives, including the preservation of working farms and forests, protection and restoration of fish and wildlife habitat, management of floodplain resources, safeguarding of water quality, and general quality of life enhancements.

Forty six percent of King County's 1,363,776 acres² is permanently protected by local, state, and federal land management agencies, of which King County currently owns and manages over 31,000 acres of parks, open space, and resource lands as well as the development rights for over 105,000 acres of privately held, working resource lands.

Jurisdiction	Acres of Protected Land	% of County-wide Acreage
Federal public lands	354,200 acres	26%
City public lands	142,900 acres	10%
State public lands	97,500 acres	7%
King County public lands	31,800 acres	2%
TOTAL	626,400 acres	46%

Table 1. Federal, State, County and City Owned Lands within King County

Open Space: Undeveloped land that is not formally recognized as a park, but typically accommodates public access. King County open spaces range from publicly owned natural areas for habitat protection to privately-owned resource lands that contribute to viewsheds.

Resource Lands: Publicly owned (or privately owned with a conservation easement) lands that are managed for the production and harvest of natural resources, such as working forests and farms.

² <http://www.metrokc.gov/mkcc/Council_facts.htm#factinf>

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks

The mission of the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks (DNRP) is to be a regional steward of the environment, provide for public health and safety, and strengthen sustainable communities by protecting water, land and natural habitats, safely disposing of and reusing wastewater and solid waste, and providing natural areas, parks and recreation programs.³ DNRP is composed of four major divisions: Parks and Recreation, Water and Land Resources, Wastewater Treatment, and Solid Waste Division. King County's DNRP, through its Parks Division and Water and Land Resources Division, manages the majority of parks, open space, and resource lands owned by King County and the *King County Greenprint* pertains to the land acquisition and conservation programs within these DNRP divisions.

Parks and Recreation Division

The King County Parks and Recreation Division manages and operates public programs that include over 15,000 acres of active and multiple use parks and open space and more than 100 miles of regional trails. King County started acquiring its recreational lands in 1922, though the majority of parks came into the King County system as a result of two funding initiatives: the \$119 million Forward Thrust bonds (1968 – 1979) and the Open Space Bond (1990 general obligation bond).⁴ These general obligation bonds provided the bulk of funding for parks acquisition, followed by revenue from Real Estate Excise Taxes and the Conservation Futures Tax.

In 2002, King County accelerated its business planning efforts for the Parks and Recreation Division in response to a looming budgetary shortfall. A Metropolitan Parks Task Force was convened in 2002, and a King County Parks Division Business Plan was completed in 2002. Three primary themes included within this Parks Division Business Plan are:

1. The county must refocus and reprioritize its regional and rural parks and recreation mission;
2. The Parks Division must embrace an entrepreneurial approach to doing business; and
3. The transition of the Parks Division will take time and realistic targets should be tracked over time to measure success.

In order to fulfill these themes, the King County Parks and Recreation Division anticipates that its future role will be characterized by:

- continued stewardship of regional park and trail assets;
- a limited role in local parks and recreation except in select underserved rural areas where there is no existing or anticipated service provider;
- developing new partnerships and service providers for active recreation facilities; and

³ <<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/>>

⁴ Some principal remains outstanding on ten different bond issues, including the 1968-1979 Forward Thrust, 1982 and 1985 Farms and Open Space, 1990 Open Space, 1993 Open Space Acquisition, 1993 Parks Land, 1993 Cedar River, 1996 Farmland and Working for Preservation, and 1997 Parks Land Acquisitions bonds.

- a conservative approach to acquiring new regional and local park assets, with most acquisition dollars being directed to regional trails connections.

Water and Land Resource Division

The Water and Land Resources Division (WLRD) works to sustain healthy watersheds, protect wastewater systems, minimize flood hazards, protect public health and water quality, preserve open space and working farms and forests, ensure adequate water for people and fish, manage drainage including stormwater and groundwater, and protect and restore natural fish and wildlife habitats.⁵

The Water and Land Resource Division's Business Plan (2004) identifies the division's future role as both a regional and rural service provider. The plan anticipates that between 2005 and 2010, WLRD's revenue sources will significantly decline, yet there will be an increasing need for the efficient delivery of regional environmental services. Declining revenues will necessitate that WLRD provide a smaller subset of services that meet the following criteria:

- are critical to carrying out the purpose of the fund source;
- maximize ratepayer value;
- protect public health and safety;
- provide measurable results;
- provide significant, direct benefits to a large segment of ratepayers or taxpayers; and
- meet regional and rural needs.

WLRD will focus its service delivery in three areas: (1) regulatory support and implementation, (2) capital projects, and (3) regional services. The WLRD Business Plan also identified the need for WLRD to continue its role as a regional service provider in the recovery of salmonid species, specifically as each Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) moves into the implementation phase of salmon recovery planning.

WLRD achieves resource conservation objectives through the protection of the following natural resource lands:

Ecological Lands: King County manages over 6,900 acres of Ecological Lands, a category of open space that is defined by regionally significant aquatic or terrestrial natural resources.⁶ Ecological Lands are managed by the Natural Resource Lands program (NRL), which is housed within the Office of Rural and Resource Programs. NRL oversees the management and site planning for county-owned Ecological Lands through work with the Parks and Recreation Division and WLRD staff. Ecological Lands are typically acquired in full fee title or via conservation easement for the purposes of protecting ecosystem functions, wildlife habitat, aquatic resources, and salmon recovery.⁷

⁵ <<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/>>

⁶ Ingrid Lundin, Personal communication.

⁷ <<http://directory.metrokc.gov/GroupDetail.asp?GroupID=30379>>

Forestry Program: King County's Forestry Program works to retain the county's forestland for its environmental, social, and economic benefits. King County manages 3,056 acres of forestland and has acquired the development rights in support of 92,852 acres of privately held working forests. The Forest program also works with private property owners to preserve forestland using the public benefit rating system and other tax incentives.⁸

Farm Program: The Farm Program protects farmland within King County using a variety of acquisition and tax incentive tools. In 1979, King County voters approved General Obligation bonds, for the purpose of funding the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP). This program purchases development rights from a list of highly productive agricultural properties, thereby restricting the property's use and development.⁹ At present, the FPP has protected over 13,070 acres of farmland at a cost of approximately \$59 million.¹⁰ King County also owns 222 acres of farmland.

Flood Hazard Reduction Services Lands: King County's Flood Hazard Reduction Services (FHRS) provides comprehensive floodplain management services along the county's six major river systems: Snoqualmie, Skykomish, Sammamish, Cedar, Green, and White. FHRS typically acquires lands within a floodplain for the purpose of completing levee maintenance, setback, or removal projects, home buy-outs for chronically flooded properties, and properties that are located within a severe channel migration zone. FHRS manages over 600 acres of floodplain properties and over 1000 river protection easements that are typically co-located with a flood control structure such as a levee or revetment.¹¹

Stormwater Services Lands: Stormwater Services (SWS) works to minimize the effects of development upon flooding, aquatic habitat degradation in lakes and streams, and water quality problems. SWS manages 791 acres mostly composed of engineered drainage structures and facilities, such as drainage retention ponds. SWS lands and associated facilities are typically acquired through mitigation for new private development. King County recognizes that "conservation and maintenance of publicly owned open space and forestland is often more cost-effective than building and maintain[ing] artificial or engineered surface and storm water management facilities."¹²

An inventory of 2004 DNRP open space and resource lands managed by the Water and Land Resources Division and the Parks and Recreation Division is contained within Table 2. These publicly owned lands are categorized by jurisdictional division, associated open space and resource lands program area, as well as the total acreage or parcels associated with each property ownership type (fee simple, easements, or development rights).

⁸ DNRP Public Lands Inventory (July 2003).

⁹ <<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/farmpp.htm>>

¹⁰ The \$59 million expended for the FPP is not entirely accurate as it includes two fee acquisitions where the county sold the properties, but retained the development rights upon the properties, and put the monies back into the FPP. Telephone Interview with Judy Herring, FPP Property Rights Specialist (Dec. 15, 2003).

¹¹ <<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/flood/rivers.htm>>

¹² KCC 9.08.060(K).

DNRP Division and Program Area	Fee Simple (acres or miles)	Easements (acres or # parcels)	Development Rights (acres)
<i>Water and Land Resource Division Lands</i>	<i>9,638 acres</i>	<i>5684 acres (eco/forest) and 1020 parcels (FHRS)</i>	<i>105,922 acres</i>
Ecological	4889 acres	1939 acres	0
Working Resource (Agriculture)	222 acres	0	13070 acres
Working Resource (Forest)	3,056 acres	3745 acres	92,852 acres
Flood Hazard Reduction Services	680 acres	1020 parcels	0
Storm Water Services	791 acres	n/a	0
<i>Park and Recreation Division Lands</i>	<i>16,115 acres</i>	<i>716 acres</i>	<i>0</i>
Active Recreation	2828 acres	245 acres	0
Multiple Use	13,287 acres	471 acres	0
Regional Trails	98 miles	n/a	0
TOTALS (WLRD + Parks)	25,753 acres	6400 acres	105,922 acres

Table 2. King County Jurisdictional Land Inventory: Water and Land Resources Division and Parks Division

Prioritizing Additional Parks, Open Space, and Resource Lands Acquisitions

These are tough fiscal times for many jurisdictions as public cynicism, global economic change, tax cutting initiatives and shifting political priorities have created a climate of fiscal restraint. However, there is an urgent need to continue acquiring and preserving parks, open space, and resource lands within King County and its rapidly urbanizing cities, as is summarized in the following five points.¹³

1. Preserving the Jewels

There are a limited number of unique properties in any given region that offer extraordinary park or natural resource values worth conserving. Whether it is waterfront, farmland, ecological sites, working forests or historical sites, it is vital to save these “jewels” before they are irretrievably lost to development. The *only* way to create a viable open space system that meets the needs of multiple generations is to conserve these lands well in advance of development and population growth.

2. The Price is Right

¹³ Springgate, Lee. “The Case to Preserve Parks and Open Space Within Growing Communities,” draft paper prepared by the Point Wilson Group, in association with the Trust for Public Land’s Northwest Region, August 19, 2004.

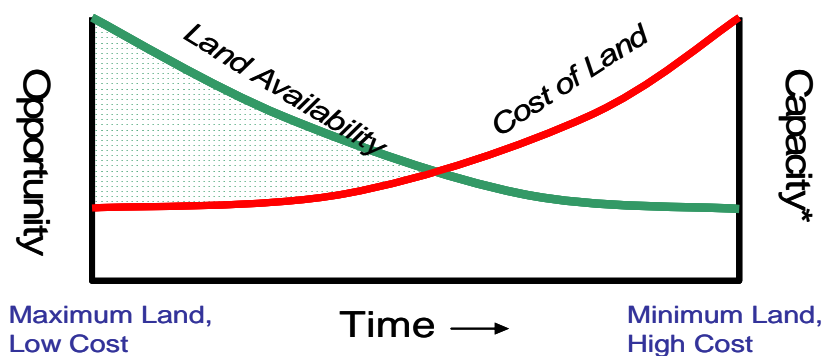
The old adage that land never gets any cheaper is generally true. It is particularly true in rapidly growing and urbanizing regions, such as King County. As land inventory diminishes, land values increase – usually far in excess of inflation or tax growth. Simply put, land will never be more affordable than it is right now.

3. The Development Quandary

Land banking should not be viewed as a secondary priority to the development of park and recreation facilities. As a region, King County's rule of thumb should be to stay in front of the demand curve for acquisition and lag behind the curve for park and facilities development. Once the land is acquired, you can always catch up on development, but communities cannot afford to be shortsighted on acquisition – particularly those communities building their inventory of parks, open space, and resource lands.

4. Shared Burden

Rapidly developing cities and counties tend to confront a classic acquisition dilemma. Typically, there are significant early opportunities to acquire or conserve high priority open space and resource lands, yet the communities lack the necessary capacity in terms of assessed value, employment base, population, tax income, staff expertise and community support to act decisively. Conversely, once capacity is developed, the opportunity to acquire the right properties at affordable prices is lost. What remains is often over priced, marginal land that fails to meet the basic park and open space needs of the community.



*(Tax Base: Employment, Population, Debt Capacity)

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Figure 2. The Conservation Challenge: Opportunity vs. Capacity

One strategy available to developing communities in this situation is to issue debt. Excess property tax levies paid back with interest over years or decades distribute the burden among current and future beneficiaries of the parks, open space, and resource lands. As more people and businesses locate within the jurisdiction over time and benefit from the park and open space system, the responsibility for repaying the debt is spread more equitably.

5. The Silent Majority

The political process, with its reliance on workshops, public hearings, quasi-judicial procedures, candidate forums and media involvement is susceptible to influence from special interests. Scientific surveys offer the general public an opportunity to weigh in on land conservation as a general concept and lend support to elected and appointed officials as they make critical decisions on budgets, bond issues, levies and capital priorities. These surveys confirm time and time again that the voting public places a very high value on conserving natural resource lands, passive park sites, trail corridors and historic landscapes.

Recent examples of the public's support of open space protection are the findings from the King County WLRD series of focus groups conducted in support of developing the Division's business plan. Focus group participants were generally supportive of the county acquiring open space lands for the purposes of preserving and restoring natural resources for future generations.¹⁴

Given the limited funding available to King County, its municipalities and most public entities, land conservation is not always prioritized as a critical public necessity. However, conserving critical open space and resource lands that reflect this region's long-term vision is a progressive, enlightened and efficient use of public funds.

¹⁴ King County Water and Land Resources, 2004. Surface Water Management Fee Focus Groups, Final Report. Prepared by EnviroIssues. May 2004.

Chapter 2: New Analysis to Guide Future Park and Open Space Acquisitions

Analysis Overview

To better understand the physical landscape and assess the potential opportunities to improve strategic acquisitions, the *Greenprint for King County* project team conducted multiple types of data collection and analysis, including:

- GIS modeling to evaluate the entire County landscape and identify existing high conservation value areas;
- Mapping the existing inventory of parks, trails and natural areas to identify gaps as well as opportunities for connections and expansion;
- Engaging a variety of public and private stakeholders in outreach discussions; and
- Evaluating current funding sources and additional capacity for funding conservation acquisitions.

All of the facts, figures and observations from these analyses should provide King County DNRP with helpful information and considerations towards refining the county's strategic approach to future acquisitions.

GIS Analysis of Current Conservation Values

Over time, King County DNRP has compiled a tremendous library of electronic data related to parks and natural resources around the county. The county had used GIS to assess acquisition priorities in the past and had also created an impressive online GIS Center for the public to access on the internet at <http://www.metrokc.gov/gis>. With the introduction of a new GIS platform, ArcView 9, and ModelBuilder software by ESRI, it was possible to build a complex new GIS model in support of the *Greenprint for King County* project.

TPL, in collaboration with ESRI, King County staff, Foresite, Earth Analytic, and Jones & Jones created a raster-based GIS landscape characterization model. This GIS model evaluates hundreds of criteria from several dozen data sets and analyzes results at either a pixel scale or parcel-level throughout King County. The *Greenprint for King County* GIS model identifies the quantity and location of existing conservation values according to the criteria of individual county parks, open space, and resource lands programs, as well as indicating where acquisitions might meet multiple resource protection objectives.

The *Greenprint for King County* is one of the first instances in which ArcGIS 9 Model Builder was used to model a landscape that was as large and complex as King County's greater than 500,000 property parcels. TPL undertook this analysis to identify portions of the King County landscape that currently have high conservation values, and are not presently protected with any kind of publicly retained property interest. This analysis reflected existing

parks and other public lands, as well private land with conservation restrictions.¹⁵ For this reason, and because ArcGIS ModelBuilder supports great model flexibility, including the ability to add additional model components, change the ranking and weighting factor of data elements, and implement completely new datasets, King County staff will continue to use the Greenprint GIS model for additional analysis beyond what was prepared for this report.

GIS Model Approach

The *Greenprint for King County* GIS model incorporates over 60 thematic data sets and incorporated as many as 50 sub-models. The GIS model design reflects extensive consultation with King County staff to select which data categories were important to analyze, the exact scope of some of the data elements to be analyzed, and how data should be ranked and weighted.¹⁶ Sub-models, or program level GIS models, were created to reflect King County DNRP parks, open space, and resource lands programs. These GIS models produced new countywide raster layers that highlighted existing conservation values according to each DNRP program area. The *Greenprint for King County* GIS model can be expanded and updated, as needed, to reflect new data sets, policy shifts, and priorities associated with land conservation in King County.

Program level GIS models created in support of the Greenprint for King project include: Ecological Lands, Working Farms, Working Forests, Flood Hazard Reduction, Parks/Regional Trails, and Marine Shoreline Natural Areas. Each GIS model generates a countywide, raster layer of current condition conservation values using a pixel size of 100' x 100'. Conservation values are expressed on a scale of 0 – 5, with '0' meaning no conservation value and '5' meaning the highest conservation value possible. Using the zonal statistics function of ArcGIS, the *Greenprint for King County* raster GIS model output can also be analyzed according to any polygon layer. For the purposes of this report, GIS model output was assessed using the the King County's Assessor's Office parcel data layer to determine parcel-level conservation values.¹⁷

A subset of data sets included in the *Greenprint for King County* program area GIS models (January 2005 report version) included:

- Natural resource data, including endangered species habitat;
- Water quality, floodplain, and hydrological data;
- Landscape integrity data, such as wildlife networks and forest vegetation patterns;
- Demographic and socio-economic data
- Regulatory data, such as jurisdictional wetlands;

¹⁵ There is a broad spectrum of management on public lands and private lands with conservation easements that results in a range of protection for conservation values. However, given the limitations of existing data for public and private conservation lands in King County, a guiding assumption for this study was to treat all known public properties and private lands with conservation restrictions as equals in a single "protected" lands class. This class of lands is not statistically included in the GIS model results.

¹⁶ Additional information about the GIS model criteria is available in the Appendix.

¹⁷ Parcel scale model results reflect use of the 'max' statistic of the ArcGIS zonal statistics function. Zonal statistics can be easily modified to incorporate other types of parcel-scale statistical analysis of the Greenprint for King County GIS model output.

- Proposed trail linkages; needed to connect local and regional trails and greenways.

GIS Modeling for DNRP Program Areas – Results and Analysis

King County DNRP maintains the *Greenprint for King County* GIS model and will continually update this analytic tool to reflect the availability of new electronic data sets, emerging regional policy, and other information. DNRP managers anticipate incorporating the GIS model into open space and resource lands program areas in the following ways:

1. Acquisition Strategy – Focus Funds on Highest Priority Acquisitions
 - Identify specific parcels of most value to purchase.
 - Common database to evaluate purchases across all programs.
2. WRIA Salmon Recovery – Implementing the Plans
 - Model can be updated to include any new direction, information, criteria by WRIA.
 - Ability to focus on specific parcels identified by problem reaches.
3. Maintenance and Operations
 - Focus limited resources.
 - Possibly use in stewardship and management of protected lands.
4. Capital Program – Upgrade Degrading Basins
 - Possibly shift focus of restoration projects.
5. Regulations – Improve Efficiency
 - Mitigation reserves program in CAO.
 - Federal and state level coordination.
6. Growth Management Act – Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) Protection
 - Targeted acquisitions and land conservation actions on the rural side of the Urban Growth Boundary to help direct urban development into cities and protect rural character.

This next section of the report provides summary tables (Tables 3 – 10), discussion, and countywide maps (Figures 3 – 11) of GIS model results and analysis, based upon a January 2005 version of the GIS model. Summary tables for each program-specific GIS model contain the following types of information: (1) conservation values, on a scale of 0 – 5 (No Value to High Value), identified by the model for all land across the county; (2) how much land within each conservation value category was “already protected” parks, public land, and private protected lands; (3) how much private land remains unprotected, according to each conservation value category; and (4) how much of those remaining unprotected lands are vacant (no record of buildings or improved land value). In addition, the number of unprotected and vacant parcels/acreage in the 100-year floodplain was computed for the flood hazard reduction GIS analysis.

Ecological Lands

Ecological Lands are comprised of a variety of natural systems across the county that contain a diversity of flora and fauna, from mountainous and forested areas to stream and river corridors, wetlands and the shorelines of lakes and Puget Sound. The primary function of these lands is to protect regionally significant ecosystem features, such as water quality, water quantity, priority species habitat such as shoreline environments that contribute to salmon recovery, aquatic habitat, and other significant ecological features.¹⁸

Existing Conservation Value – Ecological	Identified by Model		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected & Vacant	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
5 (High)	6,757	163,562	2,520	129,241	4,237	34,321	1,693	22,992
4 (Med – High)	11,181	317,945	2,427	253,039	8,754	64,906	2,767	37,870
3 (Medium)	5,028	269,207	1,312	250,043	3,716	19,164	1,040	13,249
2 (Med- Low)	18,715	200,120	955	75,936	17,760	124,184	4,714	90,154
1 (Low)	93,901	260,721	1,466	13,377	92,435	247,344	17,020	92,307
0 (Zero)	452,774	252,761	243	2,394	452,531	250,367	31,297	28,356

Table 3. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: Ecological Lands (Current Conditions, January 2005)

The January 2005 version of the Ecological Lands GIS Model identified several regions of King County as having significant conservation values. The highest value lands are identified throughout the forests of the Cascade foothills, as well as along almost all of the county's major riparian corridors. Vashon and Maury islands also have significant lands scoring medium to high for their conservation value. The areas around the Raging River basin and in the foothills forests between the Green River and White River are among those with the highest localized conservation values. High conservation values were also identified in extended sections immediately adjacent to several of the riparian corridors, including the Green River, White River, Cedar River, Bear Creek, and Snoqualmie River.

The Ecological Lands model results also identify areas of the central portion of the county, as well as parts of Vashon and Maury islands as having medium or high conservation values. This is most likely due to the county's interest in protecting a diversity of aquatic and terrestrial systems, and because these areas offer greater opportunities to protect and restore these systems due to the relatively undeveloped nature of those areas. Several other programs identified many of the same regions as having high conservation values for their criteria as well.

¹⁸ <<http://directory.metrokc.gov/ServiceDetail.asp?ServiceID=6971>>

Figure 3. Ecological Lands GIS Modeling Results: Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figure)

Forest Lands

King County's Forestry Program works to retain the county's forestland for its environmental, social, and economic benefits.¹⁹ In recent years, forestland acreage in King County has declined, especially acreage in the rural forests and privately owned working forests where increased conversion of forestland to residential development has occurred, due in part to a decline in the timber and forest products industry. Presently, forestland in King County totals approximately 876,900 acres.²⁰

Existing Conservation Values - Forest	Identified by Forest GIS Model		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected & Vacant	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
5 (High)	2,102	247,983	674	153,968	1,428	94,015	1,098	89,692
4 (Med High)	2,550	232,349	1,075	181,854	1,475	50,495	915	44,407
3 (Medium)	5,185	199,533	951	139,318	4,234	60,215	1,543	48,540
2 (Med Low)	24,407	275,727	1,549	202,886	22,858	72,841	5,340	28,634
1 (Low)	151,618	261,475	3,188	37,424	148,430	224,051	25,232	55,006
0 (Zero)	402,478	245,586	1,478	8,533	401,000	237,053	24,399	18,642

Table 4. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: Working Forest Lands (Current Conditions, January 2005)

Not surprisingly, the GIS analysis for the Forestry program identifies large segments of the Cascade foothills forest as having high conservation value. In particular, the area of the Snoqualmie Forest Preservation Agreement development rights purchase had high conservation values for continued forestry, affirming the importance of the recent development rights purchase on this land by King County.²¹ The Taylor Mountain / Raging River Basin area has very high conservation values for forestry, as do the regions of south King County between the Snoqualmie National Forest and the communities of Black Diamond and Enumclaw.

Despite the recent Snoqualmie Forest Preservation Agreement development rights purchase, there is still a significant area of need, as indicated by almost 95,000 acres of the highest conservation value forestland identified by the January 2005 version of the GIS model to have no form of permanent protection, and an 110,000 acres throughout the county have medium to high conservation value for forestland conservation.²²

¹⁹ <<http://directory.metrokc.gov/GroupDetail.asp?GroupID=13630>>

²⁰ DNR Public Lands Inventory (July 2003).

²¹ King County's \$22 million purchase of the development rights on the Snoqualmie Forest in September, 2004 occurred during the final preparation of this report. At 90,000 acres, it is one of the largest forest conservation agreements for land in a major urban area anywhere in the country.

²² Preliminary discussions in the Cascade Dialogues effort indicated that approximately 800,000 acres of the entire 1,760,000 acres of the Cascade foothills forest has been protected to some degree in the four county area of the Dialogue's analysis (King, Pierce, Snohomish, Kittitas counties).

Figure 4. Forest Lands GIS Modeling Results: Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figure)

Farmland

For more than twenty-five years King County has been committed to protecting working farms in the county. The county's Farmland Preservation Program (FPP), a voluntary program, has been purchasing development rights on farms to keep the land in agriculture in perpetuity.²³ Agricultural land in King County has remained relatively constant at approximately 40,000 acres,²⁴ including 222 acres of farmland managed by the county, and the development rights on 13,070 acres of privately held farms.²⁵

Existing Conservation Value - Farmland	Identified by Farm GIS Model		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected & Vacant	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
5 (High)	389	11,528	290	9,380	99	2,148	38	727
4 (Med – High)	773	10,131	115	1,739	658	8,392	257	3,455
3 (Medium)	1,585	10,722	123	2,194	1,462	8,528	369	2,927
2 (Med- Low)	2,932	18,402	97	1,326	2,835	17,077	807	5,490
1 (Low)	42,324	56,195	498	4,674	41,826	51,521	4,895	13,363
0 (Zero)	540,353	1,357,341	7,800	704,721	532,553	652,620	52,165	258,967

Table 5. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: Working Farms GIS Model (Current Conditions, January 2005)

The January 2005 version of the GIS model for the Farmland program identifies two large high agricultural value regions: along the Snoqualmie River corridor from the City of Snoqualmie to the Snohomish County line, and between the Green and White rivers around Enumclaw and Black Diamond. There are also several smaller high conservation value sections identified, including agricultural lands in Kent and Auburn, and along the Sammamish River corridor through Woodinville. These areas currently support some of the best farmland in King County, and have been recognized for this value by the agricultural zoning that provides interim protection against conversion and future development.

However, permanent protection of these valuable farming regions is needed. The county has permanently protected more than 13,000 acres of farmland through its purchase of development rights program.²⁶ Yet there are still slightly more than 4000 acres of farmland without permanent protection in the region that TPL's analysis identified as having medium to high farmland values. Protecting King County's fertile river valleys has the potential to yield a multitude of public benefits, including farmland preservation, flood protection, and aquatic habitat for many terrestrial and aquatic species. Multiple resource management goals may be achieved through an integrative approach to protecting the county's river valleys, one that strives to overcome the expectation that farmland preservation, floodplain protection, and ecological protection are mutually exclusive goals.

²³ <<http://directory.metrokc.gov/ServiceDetail.asp?ServiceID=6263>>

²⁴ 2002 Annual Growth Report, at Ch. 11 and Indicator 40 (Acres in Farmland).

²⁵ King County DNRP, Water & Land Resource Division and Parks Division Public Land Inventory

²⁶ The results in Table 5 include the FPP 13,070 acres as "already protected".

Figure 5. Farmland GIS Modeling Results: Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figure)

Flood Hazard Reduction Services

King County's major river systems pose a significant threat to public safety. Yet, King County is the highest rated Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Community Rating System (CRS) community of any county in the United States. A high FEMA CRS rating is extended to communities that go beyond the federal government's minimum requirements for floodplain management.

Flood Hazard Reduction Services (FHRS) provides a vital role in managing the county's floodplains and protecting the public health and safety of citizens from flooding events along the county's major rivers, including the South Fork Skykomish, Snoqualmie, Cedar, Sammamish, Green, and White Rivers. Apart from maintaining the county's system of over 500 levees and revetments, FHRS incorporates innovative floodplain management approaches to restore natural processes along the county's rivers, as a means to protect the communities from significant flood events. Specific FHRS floodplain protection approaches include: targeted open space acquisitions within the floodplain, flood-prone home buy-outs and elevations, levee setbacks and removals, ongoing maintenance of pre-existing flood protection facilities, incorporating innovative riverbank bio-stabilization techniques when shoreline armoring is necessary, and the explicit objective of managing the county's floodplains for the mutually compatible objectives of flood protection and salmon habitat recovery purposes. FHRS works with local, state, and federal jurisdictions and tribes to achieve its vision of sustainable river corridors that minimize flood hazard risks to humans while integrating natural resources and community needs.²⁷

Existing Conservation Value – Flood Protection	Identified by Flood Hazard Reduction GIS Model		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected and w/in FEMA's 100 yr Floodplain	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
5 (High)	13,230	178,228	2,483	118,210	10,747	60,018	9,095	43,121
4 (Med High)	10,520	278,726	2,487	221,528	8,033	57,198	1,668	7,378
3 (Medium)	3,946	115,968	647	63,275	3,299	52,693	397	13,841
2 (Med Low)	6,181	321,188	1,622	290,635	4,559	30,553	416	1,022
1 (Low)	100,709	301,639	1,460	27,045	99,249	274,594	3,586	20,116
0 (Zero)	453,754	266,905	216	3,290	453,538	263,615	2,925	8,106

Table 6. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: Flood Hazard Reduction Lands GIS Model (Current Conditions, January 2005)

As one might expect, the Flood Hazard Reduction program's modeling results identify the river corridors as having the highest conservation values for the program's goals. What is also notable is how the program's weightings recognized areas of the Cascade foothills as having medium and high conservation values. These areas identify rural regions with significant tree cover, which offers valuable water retention capacity.

²⁷ <<http://directory.metrokc.gov/GroupDetail.asp?GroupID=13660>>

Figure 6. Flood Hazard Reduction GIS Modeling Results: Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figure)

Parks and Regional Trails

The services provided by the King County Parks and Recreation Division includes managing a system of regional parks and trails, rural parks, ball fields and swimming pools, interpretive and educational opportunities, as well as open space protection and wildlife habitat preservation.²⁸ As noted earlier in this report, the Parks and Recreation Division Business Plan (2002) provides the foundation for anticipating that the King County Parks System's future role will be characterized by the following: continued stewardship of regional park and trail assets; a limited role in local parks and recreation except in select underserved rural areas where there is no existing or anticipated service provider; developing new partnerships and service providers for active recreation facilities; and a conservative approach to acquiring new regional and local park assets, with most acquisition dollars being directed to regional trails connections.

The GIS modeling for the Parks and Recreation Division had to match the range of services it offers, and the distinct priorities of some of these service lines. For this reason, three Parks GIS models runs were conducted in January 2005 to analyze areas that offered conservation values for passive parks and open space, as well as potential areas for trail linkages between existing parks and trails. A composite of the results of the individual Parks program GIS models was created, identifying those areas that could serve multiple goals of the Park program.

Existing Conservation Value - Parks	Identified by Model		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected & Vacant	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
5 (High)	1,264	1,611	119	489	1,145	1,122	325	572
4 (Med – High)	1,768	2,309	105	386	1,663	1,923	436	771
3 (Medium)	3,097	11,859	226	6,164	2,871	5,695	364	4,243
2 (Med- Low)	8,774	392,084	4,194	341,681	4,580	50,403	1,633	36,987
1 (Low)	46,082	567,165	3,522	353,276	42,560	213,889	10,339	130,946
0 (Zero)	527,355	487,625	749	21,985	526,606	465,640	45,430	111,403

Table 7. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: Parks and Regional Trails GIS Model (Current Conditions, January 2005)

The highest conservation value areas for the Parks program were several corridors between existing parks as well as along major landforms in the county. For instance, high value connections include the trolley trail from Shoreline to Seattle, the eastern shore of Lake Sammamish, the East Side rail trail, an east-west corridor along the Bonneville Power Administration transmission line, and along the Green and White River corridors. In addition, there were several areas identified for the Parks program as having high conservation value, primarily because these lands abut existing regional parks, such as the Taylor Mountain Forest and Raging River region, as well as areas along the protected foothills in unincorporated southern King County.

²⁸ <<http://directory.metrokc.gov/GroupDetail.asp?GroupID=14000>>

Figure 7. Parks GIS Modeling Results: Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figure)

Additional GIS Analysis

Several additional modeling exercises were conducted by the project team to help identify high conservation values for portions of the county landscape that were not captured in the DNRP program-specific GIS models, described in the preceding section of this report. Specifically, the additional modeling analysis examined the Puget Sound shoreline, as well as identifying populations that were relatively underserved in terms of park accessibility. Finally, TPL wanted to analyze where multiple model runs identified specific areas as high conservation values for multiple King County land acquisition and conservation program areas.

Puget Sound Shoreline

King County has significant marine shoreline along Vashon/Maury Island, as well as along the western boundary of the county mainland. Because initial runs of the GIS model produced inconclusive conservation value results for the Puget Sound shoreline, data was assembled to conduct two additional modeling exercises to evaluate high value areas along the Puget Sound shoreline for 1) ecologically significant areas, and 2) public access to shoreline parks.

For natural areas, TPL measured the presence of several desirable habitat components, such as eelgrass beds, salt marshes, forage fish spawning, marine reserves, important bird areas, marine riparian vegetation and large woody debris and drift logs. TPL also included several measures of detrimental development, such as armoring, overwater structures and impervious surface.

Existing Conservation Value – Puget Sound Shorelines	Identified by Shorelines Natural Areas GIS Model		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected & Vacant	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
5 (High)	17	8	0	0	17	8	16	6
4 (Med – High)	186	124	1	1	185	123	110	75
3 (Medium)	381	205	9	15	372	190	134	68
2 (Med- Low)	829	461	3	5	826	456	247	154
1 (Low)	1,353	818	4	5	1,349	813	247	162
0 (Zero)	585,590	1,462,699	8,906	724,007	576,684	738,692	57,777	284,464

Table 8. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: Puget Sound Shoreline Natural Areas GIS Model (Current Conditions, January 2005)

Several high value regions were identified for conservation along the Puget Sound shoreline. The overwhelming majority of the highest value shoreline identified is along Vashon and Maury Islands. This is likely due to the less developed character of the shoreline on the two islands compared to the rest of the King County mainland. There were several sections of mainline coast that also had high shoreline natural area values in the model. Interestingly, several of these sections of shoreline correspond with existing parks, including Golden

Gardens, Myrtle Edwards Park, and Ed Munro Seahurst Park. In addition, there are high conservation values along several sections of the city of Normandy Park shoreline, as well as between Poverty and Dumas Bays in Federal Way.

The Puget Sound nearshore is a tremendous natural resource not only for wildlife habitat, but also as a regional resource for the human population along the Sound. For this reason, TPL recommends integrating improved access to and appreciation of the Puget Sound shoreline with efforts to protect and restore the Sound's wildlife and habitat. To identify gaps in public access to the shoreline, TPL identified (Figure 10) where urban populations along the shoreline (more than 1,000 people per square mile) live more than a quarter mile from a park with frontage on the Sound.²⁹ In addition, shoreline access gaps were calculated for slightly less dense population blocks (between 500-1,000 people per square mile).

Existing Conservation Value – Puget Sound Shoreline Access	Identified by Model		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected & Vacant	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
5 (High)	8,877	3,335	0	0	8,877	3,335	1,039	600
3 (Medium)	855	1,319	0	0	855	1,319	195	244
0 (Zero)	578,624	1,459,664	8,923	724,033	569,701	735,631	57,297	284,085

Table 9. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: Puget Sound Shoreline Access GIS Model (Current Conditions, January 2005)

The analysis indicates that while the majority of the population living in proximity to Puget Sound enjoys access to neighborhood parks along the shoreline, there are several areas where dense urban populations could be served better with additional access to the shore. Specific areas identified by TPL's analysis where access to the shoreline could be improved include Three Trees Point in Burien, along the Des Moines waterfront, between Poverty and Dumas Bays in Federal Way, and near the Highlands in northern King County. Opportunities to improve public access to the shoreline will not be easy in any of these areas, as private development along the Sound limits the number of opportunities to create parks on existing undeveloped land. There is precedence in King County for cities to purchase several adjacent private properties to assemble a shoreline park, such as the efforts that led to Meydenbauer Bay and Gene Coulon Parks.

²⁹ Note: this measure does not include boat launches, port properties and other public areas that do not offer the public passive recreation park space.

Figure 8. Puget Sound Shoreline Natural Areas GIS Modeling Results (North): Existing Conditions (January 2005)

Figure 9. Puget Sound Shoreline Natural Area GIS Modeling Results (South): Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figures)

Figure 10. Puget Sound Shoreline Public Access GIS Modeling Results: Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figure)

Park Gap Analysis

TPL analyzed park gaps across the jurisdictions within King County using a range of criteria, including:

- Population density: to map areas of high population density without access to a neighborhood park (more than a quarter mile from existing parks, or an eighth of a mile from parks smaller than 1 acre);
- Children: to identify regions of King County where there are high percentages of the population below the age of eighteen without access to neighborhood parks; and
- Income: where there are higher densities of households making less than \$25,000 per year without access to neighborhood parks.

Results

Urban Areas: The majority of the King County population living in cities is well served by an excellent system of parks, as the map indicates only scattered areas for potential improvement in the more urban areas of the county. Nonetheless, improvements in the urban areas can dramatically improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents. The highest value areas for improving neighborhood access in parks can be found just north of downtown Seattle, in the South Lake Union neighborhood and through parts of Capital Hill.

Growing Cities: The growing communities to the north and east of Lake Sammamish, as well as in the southwestern region of the county, contain significant concentrations of children under the age of eighteen without access to a neighborhood park. Interspersed throughout these two regions are several areas that are more than a mile from any park, and in the southwest part of the county, there is also a significant lower income population without access to neighborhood parks. Both regions offer tremendous opportunities to serve these growing communities by adding a park of regional significance.

There are clearly several areas in western King County where populations could be better served with additional parks. In particular, the neighborhoods of Rainier Beach, High Point, and White Center showed up as having high park gap needs, as well as areas along I-5 in the Kent and Des Moines region.

Overall Combined GIS Analysis

One of the goals of the *Greenprint for King County* was to identify those areas of the landscape with particularly high conservation potential, where acquisitions could potentially meet multiple conservation goals. TPL employed a counting methodology to identify where multiple programs identified the same areas as having similar conservation values (Table 10). This methodology counted the number of the individual, program area-specific GIS model runs that identified a particular parcel as having a medium high or high conservation value (conservation value of 4 or 5). A parcel that scored a four or a five on three different model runs would therefore be assigned a score of “3” in the program agreement count. GIS program area models included within this analysis included the following: ecological lands, farmlands, forestlands, flood hazard reduction, parks, marine shoreline natural area, and marine shoreline access. This analysis reflected a January 2005 version of the *Greenprint for King County* GIS model.

Conservation Values: # of Program Area GIS Models in Agreement	GIS Model(s) Identified a Medium High (4) or High (5) Conservation Value		Already Protected		Unprotected		Unprotected & Vacant	
	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres	# of Parcels	# of Acres
7	106	714	15	163	91	551	64	445
6	521	1,703	139	667	382	1,036	151	580
5	4,203	253,954	1,713	223,735	2,490	30,219	1,002	23,693
4	8,041	194,913	2,543	155,447	5,498	39,466	1,694	26,165
3	10,307	172,146	1,647	137,053	8,660	35,093	2,403	18,776
2	15,682	186,973	954	118,359	14,728	68,614	3,776	42,318
1	245,075	437,419	1,254	59,393	243,821	378,026	28,436	148,871
0	304,421	216,492	658	29,212	303,763	187,280	21,005	24,081

Table 10. Greenprint for King County GIS Model Summary Statistics: # of Program Area GIS Models in Agreement (Current Conditions, January 2005)

This analysis indicated the potential for conserving and managing land for multiple resource benefits. Tens of thousands of acres across King County meet the medium to high conservation value criteria of three, four and even five different program measures. These portions of the county, where multiple programs identified medium to high conservation values, indicate locations where there is potential to manage resources to meet multiple open space and resource lands conservation goals. Not all lands and resources may be managed for multiple purposes since some program objectives are mutually exclusive. These areas require additional site level analysis to assess the degree to which the land and its resources may be managed to meet multiple program area conservation goals. The lowland river valleys within King County are exemplary in their capacity to support productive farms, salmon habitat, regional trails, and flood protection facilities. Additional policy and programmatic assessment of these portions of the county will determine the degree to which specific open space parcels can accommodate multiple resource protection or programmatic objectives.

Figure 11. Overall Combined GIS Modeling Results - Agreement Count: Existing Conditions (January 2005)

(Insert Figure)

Open Space Inventory and Conceptual Corridors

Introduction & Approach

As a complement to the *Greenprint for King County* GIS model analysis, TPL and Jones & Jones landscape architects prepared maps of the existing parks, open space, and resource lands inventory in King County, and then added conceptual corridors³⁰ that could connect existing city and County parks and trails into an impressive regional system.

The inventory base layer of the map includes information on several types of land use including existing parks and trails; publicly owned working forests and watershed protection lands around rivers, lakes, and streams; private land with conservation easements; and private forests and regions zoned for farming. TPL conducted interviews with representatives from eighteen cities and followed up with a daylong workshop to collect information regarding future open space acquisitions the cities were contemplating adding to this inventory. (Table 11 has a list of all outreach contacts, including those cities that provided information for these maps).

TPL and Jones & Jones landscape architects then added the conceptual corridor connections to the maps based on the outreach discussions with the cities, as well as historic open space plans, such as the Olmsted plan for the Seattle area, and finally some logical connections following landscape elements such as rivers and utility line corridors. While these conceptual corridors do not reflect more detailed feasibility measures, such as the willingness of property owners, or the physical constraints of roads, they do provide a preliminary vision for what elements of an impressive regional system of parks and trails might look like with additional future acquisitions.

Results & Analysis

Overall, this region of King County offers tremendous opportunities for public access to the shorelines of Puget Sound, Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish. There are several parks and trails along these shoreline areas, but more could be added to take advantage of these regional resources. Completing trail access around Lake Washington, particularly the contemplated east side rail trail, would be a significant achievement. In addition, completing trails from Marymoor Park to Yarrow Bay, and from Cougar Mountain to south Lake Washington, would provide important connections between freshwater shorelines and important regional parks. Around Seattle, completing the corridors envisioned in the Olmsted Plan is an important opportunity, as would be restoring some of the public lands along Elliot Bay at the heart of Seattle's downtown waterfront. Finally, additional park acquisitions and trail connections need to be identified and pursued for the South Park and Georgetown neighborhoods along the Duwamish River (Figure 12).

³⁰ For the purposes of this report, TPL considers "corridor" to generally refer to connections between open space and resource lands, ranging from individual trails to systems of parks and open spaces that are adjacent to, or in close proximity of one another (often referred to as "greenways").

Further east in the county along the eastern shore of Lake Washington and around Lake Sammamish (Figure 13) the overall emphasis should be on connecting existing parks, open space, and resource lands. Other trail opportunities should be considered amongst the working farms in the river corridors.

Although the cities of the North Bend, Snoqualmie and Carnation region (Figure 14) are well served with existing parks, improved trail connections are possible to the regional parks and resource lands along the I-90 Mountains to Sound Greenway.

Vashon and Maury Island communities have identified several potential acquisitions that will significantly improve the open space and resource lands on the islands (Figure 15). In addition, shoreline trails on both islands would add great value, as would trails along Vashon Island's riparian corridors. The communities in the southwestern portion of the county have identified several important potential acquisitions that will build their open space and resource lands systems.

Perhaps more than any other region of King County, the areas around Kent and Auburn, and Covington and Maple Valley demonstrate the efforts of communities to build their open space systems and, where possible, utilize open space and resource lands as community separators. There are also several valuable potential corridors for connecting in this region, along Highway 18 as it is redeveloped, following the Bonneville Power transmission line, and through additions to the existing parks, open space, and resource lands along the Green River (Figure 16).

The White River along the county's southern border merits greater attention for its potential to create a corridor or parks and natural areas similar to what has been assembled along the Green River (Figure 17).

Figure 12. City Priority and Connectivity - Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Tukwila, and Renton Region

(Insert Figure)

Figure 13. City Priority and Connectivity - Redmond, Bellevue, Sammamish, Issaquah, Duvall, Carnation, and Snoqualmie Region

(Insert Figure)

Figure 14. City Priority and Connectivity Region - North Bend, Snoqualmie, and Carnation Region
(Insert Figure)

Figure 15. City Priority and Connectivity Region - Vashon Island, Federal Way, Des Moines, Burien, SeaTac, and Normandy Park Region

(Insert Figure)

Figure 16. City Priority and Connectivity - Maple Valley, Auburn, Kent, Renton, Issaquah, Covington, Newcastle, and Black Diamond Region

(Insert Figure)

Figure 17. City Priority and Connectivity - Enumclaw, Maple Valley, Covington, and Black Diamond Region

(Insert Figure)

Outreach to Cities, Agencies and Nonprofits

Introduction & Approach

Since a primary objective of TPL’s greenprinting work for King County was to create a common conservation vision for King County, it was imperative to interview incorporated cities and a significant number of other public and non profit entities that play important roles in acquiring, preserving and protecting critical resource lands. Discussions with the cities were particularly important because of the intense urbanization pressure in King County’s incorporated cities. Roughly 80 percent of the county population resides in the 39 incorporated cities, which comprise only 18 percent of the county land area. Although King County’s population has not increased greatly in the past decade, the increase in combination with the county’s existing large population has fueled the housing development industry, particularly in the urban areas of the county per the mandate of the State Growth Management Act.³¹

The project team reviewed the conservation plans and priorities of approximately twenty cities, as well as those of King County DNRP, four state agencies, the Port of Seattle, Cascade Land Conservancy and the Mountains to Sound Greenway. Interviews were also conducted with King County Council members, the King County Conservation Futures Citizens Committee, as well as the Nature Conservancy and People for Puget Sound. As a general rule, those interviewed were CEO’s and key staff.³²

Table 11. List of *Greenprint for King County* Outreach Contacts

Steve Sarkozy, City Manager	Bellevue
Mayor Rosemarie Ives	Redmond
Mayor Peter B. Lewis	Auburn
Larry Fetter, Parks Director	Burien
Merlin MacReynold, City Manager	Normandy Park
Jay Covington, Chief Admin Officer	Renton
Mayor John Wise	Enumclaw
Mayor Mary-Alyce Burleigh	Kirkland
John Starbard, City Manager	Maple Valley
David Moseley, City Manager	Federal Way
Tony Piasecki, City Manager	Des Moines
Andrew Dempsey, City Manager	Covington
David Erickson, Parks Director	Covington
Mayor Jim White	Kent
Dick Deal	Shoreline

³¹ Enacted in 1990, the Growth Management Act set “growth targets” for households and jobs and required urban counties and their cities to develop and adopt comprehensive plans and regulations to implement the plans. Each target is the amount of growth to be accommodated by a jurisdiction during the 20-year Growth Management planning period. Residential targets were expressed as a range of households for each jurisdiction to accommodate between 1992 and 2012.

³² It was beyond the scope of this report for TPL to then confirm these opinions and perspectives with respective legislative bodies.

Mayor Ken G. Hearing	North Bend
Mayor Ava Frisinger	Issaquah
Jim English, President of Vashon Community Council	Vashon Island
Yvonne Kuperberg, Vashon Land Trust, Parks Director	Vashon Island
Tim Ceis, City of Seattle Deputy Mayor	Seattle
Ken Bounds Parks Director	Seattle
Hon. Larry Phillips	King County
Hon. Carolyn Edmonds	King County
Hon. Dow Constantine	King County
Hon. Kathy Lambert	King County
Hon. David Irons	King County
Terry Lavender, Conservation Futures Citizens Committee	King County
Cascade Land Conservancy / Cascade Dialogue	
Shared Strategy for Puget Sound	
Doug Sutherland, DNR	Washington
Fran McNair, DNR	Washington
Rex Derr, State Parks	Washington
Doug MacDonald, State Transportation Director	Washington

Discussions revolved around the following questions:

1. Does your city have a clear conservation vision? Is that vision graphically represented?
2. What are your major land acquisition/conservation priorities?
3. Is there political support to achieve these priorities?
4. What should the county's priorities be?
5. Is there potential for better city and County coordination?
6. What are your stewardship goals and management capacity?³³
7. What are your principal funding mechanisms?

Follow up workshops were conducted that provided an opportunity for organizations to review the GIS inventory data and confirm the information provided to TPL staff on conservation priorities within their jurisdiction.

Results & Analysis

This outreach approach was very well received by all of those interviewed. There was genuine appreciation that their plans, issues and perspectives were being taken into consideration. There was general acknowledgement that land conservation was too splintered and uncoordinated within King County, and those interviewed were universally pleased that an initiative was underway focused on a more regional approach to land conservation.

³³ For the purposes of this report, TPL considers "stewardship" to generally refer to the management of park and open space lands, including a range of caretaking activities such as maintenance and operations ("M&O") at parks, planting and harvesting on resource lands, to restoration projects in natural areas.

City Conservation Visions

Many cities have a coherent conservation vision, typically one that acknowledges the importance of environmental protection while emphasizing traditional parks and recreational values. Most cities lacked a graphic representation of their conservation vision, in spite of adopted plans, maps, and documents pertaining to parks, open space, and resource lands. There is a growing awareness, among the cities, of the need to protect critical open space lands and establish or complete trail and greenway connections, within city boundaries and between jurisdictions.

Virtually everyone TPL interviewed agreed that effectively integrating conservation goals with other jurisdictions and organizations to achieve a larger conservation vision in King County makes tremendous sense. Nonetheless, most communities were also clear that they did not have strong opinions about regional conservation priorities, and many articulated support for the county providing leadership focused on protecting regional priorities and leveraging cross-jurisdictional opportunities while cities focused on local priorities. This definition of potential roles is largely consistent with the King County Comprehensive Plan that recognizes the county as the appropriate coordinator of the development of a regional parks, open space, and resource lands system³⁴ consisting of regional parks, trails, and resource lands in the rural area, while the cities provide local park, trail and open space lands in the Urban Growth Area.³⁵ Communities also want the county's assistance in maintaining GMA boundaries and pursuing strategic acquisitions in pending annexation areas, as discussed in the next section.

Parks, open space, and resource lands in the UGA

Generally speaking, King County currently prioritizes its open space and resource lands efforts in unincorporated rural areas, while cities primarily are focused on incorporated lands. The land in Potential Annexation Areas (PAA), the area between the UGA boundary and incorporated city lines, is currently not a priority for either the county or cities. However, that area represents an opportunity to acquire parks and open spaces in advance of future development that is certain to occur, ensuring that future residents in this area will have adequate open space lands in their communities.

The UGA in King County contains almost 27,000 acres of vacant or potentially redevelopable residential land, with the largest acreages of land supply in South King County (11,500 acres) and the Eastside (7,300 acres). Presumably, by the year 2012, all of those persons residing within the potential annexation area of the UGA's will be annexed to adjoining cities. This is a total population of approximately 220,000 living within 77 square miles.³⁶

Several cities identified the PAA as an area where they would welcome the county's assistance with acquiring sufficient park and open space lands before future development precludes the opportunity to create these open space systems. While no specific

³⁴ 2000 King County Comprehensive Plan, at Sec. 1.

³⁵ 2000 King County Comprehensive Plan, at Chapter 5.

³⁶ 2002 King County Annual Growth Report, at 51.

recommendations were articulated about how this might occur, and what the specific role of the county and cities would be, cooperative efforts to acquire and arrange management for lands in the PAA is an opportunity consistent with all of the themes and strategies in this report.

Park and open space acquisitions in the PAA could address to some degree another recurrent theme raised by cities: creating community buffers. Many communities articulated the idea of using parks and open spaces as buffers between communities, and as pieces of the landscape that provide a sense of place and identity as communities are asked to accept greater development and population density.

Stewardship

Stewardship, including the management and operations costs associated with upkeep of conservation lands was recognized as a significant issue. However, the majority of cities interviewed did not have formal stewardship goals and objectives, site management plans or dedicated management / maintenance funding. Many communities are taking steps to begin addressing stewardship requirements. Stewardship goals, management plans, and environmental education efforts are beginning to emerge in a number of communities, and several cities are beginning to utilize volunteers and non-profit community groups to manage natural resource sites. Some cities are shifting modest levels of funding from traditional park maintenance to environmental management.

Although many communities expressed concern with regard to their capacity to absorb more land management responsibility, several nonetheless want to take greater responsibility for parks within their jurisdiction, provided appropriate funding can be arranged.

Funding

Many cities expressed a significant interest in having increased involvement in any future County park bonds or levies. Surprisingly, several cities expressed confusion during interviews about the purpose of the most recent levy.³⁷ However, many cities were also clear that they appreciated not only assistance with funding from King County, but also the technical expertise of the county staff to help achieve key priorities in communities across the county. County assistance towards trails, missing greenway segments and other park and open space needs at the local level could generate increased good will for the county, and could also potentially translate into greater support of future funding measures.

Communication

Many cities indicated their interest in having a more regular dialogue with the county. This was true at all levels, from discussions between executives to staff providing technical assistance. The impression from TPL's discussions with the cities is that increased dialogue

³⁷ The previous levy was intended to provide additional funding for management and operations, although several cities contacted perceived it as being for funding new park acquisitions

could improve trust between some cities and the county, providing a better basis for future collaboration on open space and resource lands initiatives.

TPL will be conducting additional meetings with most of the outreach participants once a draft of this report is completed. TPL will be sharing the overarching conservation vision, major priorities for the region, as well as evaluating general interest in future financing strategies. It will be important to stress the potential integration of local and regional conservation priorities. With continued cooperation and a shared sense of mission, a more coherent land conservation approach should yield enormous benefits for King County.

Conservation Finance Survey

Introduction & Approach

The King County Land Conservation Financing Study, completed in 2004 by TPL, provides an overview of King County's land conservation programs and funding sources, a survey of state and federal land conservation programs and funds, as well as an exploration of the county's fiscal capacity. Research for the study utilized electronic resources, including information available on the Internet from King County, Washington State and federal agencies. TPL reviewed King County financial documents, the 2003 county Annual Growth Reports, the King County Parks Business Plan, and the King County Comprehensive Plan, as well as documents specifically related to King County DNRP programs. King County DNRP staff also compiled and provided supplemental data that comprised the most up-to-date information available from county and state personnel. Telephone interviews were conducted with appropriate state and county personnel to obtain more specific and current data regarding programmatic land conservation achievements and expenditures.

Results & Analysis

King County has made significant investments in land conservation, utilizing a combination of state and federal funds, dedicated taxes, bonds, and general fund appropriations.

State Funding

A strong fiscal commitment on the part of state government through a stable revenue source has been a critical component of effective local land conservation. The State of Washington has provided substantial funding for land and resource conservation through its aquatic lands, boating facilities, wildlife habitat, and recreation funding programs administered by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation.³⁸ These programs are supported by a combination of state-earned income, motor vehicle gasoline taxes, general obligation bonds, and legislative appropriations. However, these programs and other state agency conservation spending have been unable to keep up with current demand, as evidenced by the large number of unfunded requests received each year. Moreover, certain state programs, such as the Agricultural Conservation Funding Program, have not been formally implemented due to a lack of funding.

³⁸ <<http://www.wa.gov/iac>>

Another significant source of funding for conservation and restoration in Washington is the Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB). Created in 1999 by the state legislature, the SRFB provides grants for salmon habitat protection and restoration projects, which have totaled more than 500 projects since the Board was created. The SRFB is composed of five citizens appointed by the Governor, including Bill Ruckelshaus who serves as the Chair, and five directors of the major state natural resource agencies, and it works closely with local watershed groups throughout Washington.³⁹ As salmon recovery plans are adopted in Puget Sound, it is likely that significant state and federal funds will be available through the SRFB for additional protection and restoration projects.⁴⁰

Local Financing Authority

King County uses revenue from a combination of general obligation bonds, Conservation Futures property taxes to fund primarily land conservation projects, and Real Estate Excise Taxes to fund park development projects and to a lesser degree, incentive grant programs such as WaterWorks and Urban Reforestation and Habitat Restoration (now “Wild Places in City Spaces”). All of these financing mechanisms constitute dedicated levies for land and resource protection that are protected from potential changes in priorities during the annual budgeting process.

General obligation bonds are important and popular tools for local land conservation in King County, as evidenced by the number of bond referenda. Bonds provide several advantages over pay-as-you-go funding, including the opportunity to make significant land acquisitions in the near term, presumably before the price of land increases further. While King County currently has capacity under its debt limit, there has been no recent provision for issuing bonds for the acquisition of lands for open space and resource lands as revenue from outstanding bonds is being depleted. King County also levies a Conservation Futures property tax of \$.05698 cents to fund open space acquisitions in the county.⁴¹ In addition, revenue generated by a Real Estate Excise Tax of 0.25 percent of the selling price of real property is utilized to fund park acquisition and improvements in unincorporated King County.

Matching State and Local Incentives for Conservation

Incentives for local action strengthen partnerships between state and local governments and between local jurisdictions. Incentives, often in the form of matching grants like those offered by the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation or low-interest loans, encourage local governments and nonprofit conservation organizations to develop programs and create financing mechanisms to leverage state funds. In King County, the Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation has provided \$50.4 million in grants, matching \$75.5 million in local government funding.⁴²

³⁹ <<http://www.iac.wa.gov/srfb/default.asp>>

⁴⁰ King County has served as the lead agency in developing WRIA plans for watersheds in the County.

⁴¹ 2005 figure, per DNRP Director's Office

⁴² <<http://www.iac.wa.gov/>>

County incentive programs include the Community Salmon Fund, salmon habitat and restoration funds from the King Conservation District (with Watershed Forums as decision maker with the King Conservation District Board), and WaterWorks. Each provides grants that are utilized by recipients to leverage additional funds for water quality and water-dependent habitat projects. However, each of these funding programs rely on annual appropriations and do not have dedicated sources of revenue.

Purchase and Transfer of Development Rights

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) is an effective device for permanent open space and farmland protection because it maximizes conservation dollars while allowing for continued private land ownership and management. King County has an active PDR program, primarily employed to protect working farms and forests. The Farmland Preservation Program has protected over 13,000 acres in King County at a cost of \$59 million⁴³. In 2004, King County finalized the Snoqualmie Forest Preservation Agreement that resulted in the acquisition of over 90,000 acres of development rights, on forest lands, at a cost of \$22 million.

Adopted as a pilot project in October 1998 and converted to permanent status in September 2001, the King County Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program allows individuals to purchase and sell residential development rights from lands that provide a public benefit, such as farms, forests, open space, regional trails, designated urban separator lands, and habitat for threatened or endangered species. Development rights may be transferred through private party transactions or, under limited circumstances, they may be purchased by the county TDR Bank. As of June 2004, roughly 1,500 acres of working resource and ecological open space lands have been protected through the TDR Program, at a cost of approximately \$15 million.⁴⁴

While King County's efforts have been very effective using a wide array of the available funds for conservation projects, a number of policy changes could further strengthen the county's land conservation framework and bring additional funds to the table. Those specific recommendations are included in the following chapter, and are further detailed in the Conservation Finance Study report included as an appendix to this document.

⁴³ <<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/farmpp.htm>> The \$59 million expended for the FPP includes two fee acquisitions where the county sold the properties, but retained the development rights upon the properties, and put the monies back into the FPP. Telephone Interview with Judy Herring, FPP Property Rights Specialist (Dec. 15, 2003).

⁴⁴ <<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/tdr/>>

Chapter 3: Recommendations

The analysis TPL has undertaken in the form of GIS modeling, mapping, outreach, and a conservation finance survey confirms that King County and the Department of Natural Resources and Parks has assembled a tremendous system of open space and resource lands throughout the county. At the same time, this analysis provides clear indications that there are gaps in this system, and that there is additional land throughout the county that need to be conserved.

Moving forward, King County DNRP can use elements from TPL's analysis, such as the GIS model, to further examine, rank and prioritize lands that meet the goals of the individual Ecological, Forest, Farm, Flood Hazard, and Park lands programs. These prioritization tools can help assure that high priority properties are identified and purchased for each of the existing program areas.

Over the last 12 months of this Greenprinting study, TPL has identified significant opportunities to move beyond DNRP's customary programmatic approach of setting priorities and then acquiring and managing lands for single uses – i.e. purchasing and managing land for ecological function, which could also serve as a park or trail if managed for multiple resource values instead. Acquiring and managing land for the goals of individual programs is inefficient, especially in the current budget climate with very limited funding available for the acquisition and stewardship of land. TPL's recommendations are focused on aligning acquisition and stewardship priorities with meeting multiple programmatic objectives. While existing program areas should continue to use dedicated funding sources to acquire and manage lands that match their individual program goals, TPL recommends that non-dedicated funds (several examples in Table 12) be directed to cross-programmatic purchases and management, which will help stretch and leverage the limited funds to match their protection of land for multiple resource values where appropriate.

Conservation Vision for King County

A vision for conserving natural areas, open space and resource lands throughout King County needs to reflect the landscape themes that can be universally recognized by communities throughout King County. The thematic vision elements TPL has compiled emerged from conversations with King County DNRP staff, cities, state agencies, conservation organizations and key political and community leaders in 2004. Many aspects of this vision are feature elements of the landscape and resource values that have been recognized in the past, as well as in current forums, such as the Cascade Land Conservancy's Cascade Dialogues effort, which has also been underway this past year. There are three main underlying values TPL recommends for a conservation vision for King County:

1. ***Ecological Health:*** The ecological health of King County and the Pacific Northwest is of paramount concern to the vast majority of citizens and decision makers in this region. The relentless growth within this region will continue to place inordinate

pressure on land, water and air, and the vision for King County's future needs to have its foundation in protecting the ecological health and function of these natural resources. Environmental quality is clearly the predominant value that should influence land acquisition and preservation decisions throughout King County. Environmental quality is a by-product of protecting ecosystem services such as water quality, water quantity, salmon habitat, healthy forests and floodplains. A clear conservation vision, one that is grounded in current information, strong partnerships, and a commitment to focusing limited resources in high conservation value areas, will improve the county's ability to protect the ecological health of the land for current and future generations.

2. ***Cultural and Economic Values:*** The community expects land to be preserved in the public realm that responds to a wide range of social, economic, recreation and cultural needs. Farmlands, historic sites and buildings, trails, parks, viewpoints, public golf courses, fairgrounds, working forests and regional recreation complexes are some obvious manifestations of these community values. These special places create a sense of community and a connection between generations. While these values typically play more of a secondary role in land acquisition/preservation decisions for many conservation professionals in King County, they are still extraordinarily important to large segments of the community and political decision-makers. The vision for the county should incorporate these rather eclectic values because for many segments of the population they represent the more traditional, pragmatic and emotional side of the land preservation equation.
3. ***Connectivity:*** A connected system of trails, parks, riparian corridors, greenways, forests, agricultural valleys and shorelines creates extraordinary synergy within the region. Every piece within an integrated and connected open space system has an importance far in excess of its individual contribution. This is true for connecting parks and trails together, habitat areas to one another, and maintaining viable economic systems of working farms and forests.

The manifestation of these underlying values can be found in three geographic elements that comprise the vision in King County:

- 1) **Forests of the Cascade Foothills:** this enormous piece of the King County land base represented by the forests and wilderness in the eastern half of the county is important as a working forest and for watershed and water quality, aquatic life, recreation, and wildlife
- 2) **Rivers and Shorelines:** King County's major river corridors are geographically prominent and environmentally critical to the region. These corridors connect every basin, tributary and creek draining from the Cascade foothills to the major water bodies of Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish and all along Puget Sound. The health of these aquatic systems is critical to the region, and the shorelines of these waterbodies have tremendous value for both habitat and public access and appreciation. Integrative approaches to managing the county's freshwater and

marine shorelines have the potential to yield multiple benefits of public access, flood protection, salmon habitat recovery, aquatic resource protection, and farmland preservation.

- 3) **Community Open Spaces:** Access to parks, trails and natural areas within King County's communities is tremendously important for the region's population, as are connections between local and regional parks and trails.

Setting Acquisition Priorities

Individual King County DNRP programs have made great progress in identifying and acquiring priority lands that reflect their program-specific conservation missions. This success is reinforced by several of the GIS modeling run results that indicate high conservation value scores for the resources already protected by previous acquisitions and easements. TPL has several recommendations for King County DNRP and how the Department might further refine its approach to acquisitions that meet multiple land and water conservation objectives.

Maximize Public Benefit

King County should strive to maximize the public benefit derived from expending general funding sources. Acquisitions of critical public open space and resource lands maximize the return the public receives on its investment. A less favorable outcome is to expend general funds on special interest properties, where public benefits are limited in scope. King County should prioritize acquisitions that maximize direct and indirect public benefits, rather than purchasing lands that are limited in their provision of public goods.

Meet Cross-Programmatic Objectives

TPL recommends greater levels of cooperation and alignment between compatible DNRP program areas. Strategic land acquisition can improve King County's ability to fulfill its mandate to protect regionally significant parks, open space, and resource lands. King County DNRP historically pursued acquisitions that supported individual program interests and subsequently managed its lands accordingly. When feasible, the county should prioritize those acquisitions that support multiple public benefits over those proposals that support the objectives of a single program. More detailed programmatic and site-level analysis will be necessary to determine the degree to which a single property can be managed for multiple conservation values.

A good example of mutually compatible programs are those seeking to protect the county's major river valleys, such as flood hazard reduction services, regional trails, WRIA/salmon recovery, and ecological lands. Although these and other existing program areas should continue to use their dedicated funding sources to acquire and manage lands that match their individual goals, the county should seek to increase regional funding sources, partnerships,

and resources that strengthen an integrative, multi-programmatic approach to acquisition and land management.

Role of Regional Service Provider

King County DNRP is the logical entity to address regional park, open space and natural resource priorities that are of a scale that cannot be adequately addressed by local municipalities or state and federal agencies. A role for King County as the regional service provider is consistent with GMA, which stresses the value of a regional system of open space lands, which connect and contribute to the local open space systems established by cities throughout the county.⁴⁵ There are several regional conservation priorities (figure 18) King County DNRP should focus on:

1. The Forests of the Cascade Foothills

A critical component of King County's natural landscape are the forests and wilderness areas located in the eastern half of the county in the forested foothills of the Cascades. This enormous land base is predominantly forested and provides a multitude of public benefits, including but not limited to: working forest resource lands, salmon habitat, recreation, headwaters protection, water quality, air quality, and aesthetic qualities. Protecting the forests of the Cascade Foothills is a very high priority across the spectrum of advocates for parks, open space, and resource lands protection.

Of particular concern is the protection and management of the privately owned "forested foothills". This 200,000 +/- acre swath of forest wedged at the base of the Cascades is pivotal to the conservation vision for King County. This entire forested area is an irreplaceable natural asset that demands regional support and attention. The mosaic of private forestland and public lands encompassing national and state forests, wilderness areas, riparian headwaters, watersheds and state and county parks represents a rich environmental treasure. It deserves top priority for both the continued purchase of development rights on working forestland and the acquisition and protection of some forestland for its wildlife habitat and other ecological functions.

Protecting the forested foothills of the Cascades is not currently a high priority for many of the cities interviewed as part of this study, despite the direct and indirect public benefits that would accrue protecting this portion of the county. Cities are typically more focused upon protecting local parks, trails, and lands that are proximate to their city boundaries. Salmon recovery, water quality, water quantity, air quality, floodplain protection, and regional trails are a subset of benefits that the cities would accrue from protecting the forested foothills of the Cascades. Future conversations with cities associated with parks, open spaces, and other regionally significant lands should emphasize this theme.

King County's \$22 million purchase of the development rights in the Snoqualmie Forest in September, 2004 (Snoqualmie Forest Preservation Agreement) is a major accomplishment towards protecting the working forests and conservation values of the Cascade foothills. At

⁴⁵ County-Wide Planning Policies, online at <<http://www.metrokc.gov/ddes/gmpc/index.shtm>>

90,000 acres, it is one of the largest forest conservation agreements for land in a major urban area anywhere in the country. The purchase of the development rights means the conservation values of the undeveloped property recognized by King County are protected, while Hancock Timber Resource Group continues to own and manage property for timber, benefiting the forest products industry in the region.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ <<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/dnrp/press/2004/0909snoqualmie.htm>>

Figure 18. Conservation Vision: Regional Conservation Priorities

2. Farmland

Purchasing development rights that restrict future development on privately owned agricultural land is an effective strategy for meeting farmland protection goals in King County. As noted earlier in the GIS modeling results for Farmland, tremendous progress has been made in securing development rights on farms in the county's agricultural production district zones. However, there are still more than 4,000 acres of private land in the agricultural zone with no permanent protection against eventual conversion and development. It is true that regulatory protection in the form of agricultural zoning has provided temporary protection from conversion and development, but it is not permanent, and permanent protection is what the farming community needs.

Permanent protection for farmland increases the likelihood of that land staying in production. Maintaining productive farmlands yields multiple benefits associated with local agricultural economies, open space viewsheds, and preserving an historical use of the county's landscape.

Some of the most fertile and productive soils within King County are located along the major rivers and floodplains. These productive lands have historically been treated as exclusive County 'farm' program lands. In some cases, it may be possible to incorporate additional ecological and floodplain protection values into these lands while simultaneously maintaining agricultural production. For example, many farms within the county's Agricultural Production District have streams, wetlands, or floodplain lands. It may be possible to engage the private property owners in greater levels of targeted restoration projects in support of migratory waterfowl, salmon recovery, or agricultural drainage improvement projects. TPL recommends that the county pursue additional grants and funding sources, beyond its current levels, in support of these private farmland conservation objectives. In some instances, it may be appropriate for the county to acquire a fee simple interest in some of these lands and manage them for multiple benefits beyond agricultural production, while in many other cases a less-than-fee solution, such as the purchase of development rights and stewardship agreements, can meet the desired conservation outcome.

3. River Corridors and Lakes

King County's major river corridors and lakes are geographically prominent and environmentally critical to the region. Physical components of this surface water network include lakes, headwaters of major rivers, undeveloped upper watersheds, fertile river valleys, more developed lower watersheds, floodplains, and estuaries. Highly valuable ecosystem services accrue from river corridor and lake protection, such as water quality, salmon habitat, wildlife migration corridors, water quantity, and other ecological values. Additional public benefits from protecting these water and land resources include flood hazard reduction, increased passive recreational opportunities, aesthetic values, and viewshed corridors.

King County DNRP has prioritized the protection of these water and land resources through its Waterways 2000 initiative, basin plans, flood hazard reduction planning, WRIA planning and ongoing commitment to science-driven watershed management. These efforts have resulted in the acquisition of perpetually flooded homes in the floodplain, acquisition of

critical salmon habitat riverine environments, and other habitat restoration projects. The county is also involved in the Snohomish, Cedar/Sammamish, Duwamish/Green and Puyallup/White WRIA salmon recovery processes. Past efforts on the Green River provide a good example of how a mix of public ownership and management interspersed with private ownership and conservation easements can provide tremendous public benefits. Portions of the Green River are characterized by limited development in sensitive areas, early action salmon recovery habitat protection/restoration, reduction of flood hazards using ecologically sustainable techniques, and arranging for public access on trails that traverse the public and private ownerships. TPL recommends that the county continue to develop and employ its integrative (public lands, private lands, regulatory, policy, programmatic) approach to conserving its major river corridors and lakes.

Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish offer tremendous public access opportunities for the county's urban population to large freshwater lakes. The shorelines of these lakes have been valued by people since the Salish tribes first settled in the region, to when an Olmsted Plan for Seattle's open space incorporated elements of the Lake Washington shoreline, to relatively recent efforts since the 1970s to improve water quality and parks for people to better enjoy the lakes. TPL recommends that King County work with the communities along these waterways and lakes to gain increased public access.

4. The Puget Sound Shoreline

The Puget Sound shoreline is yet another jewel in the county's natural resource inventory. King County should contemplate making protection of the natural functions of the Sound a top conservation priority, as well as improving public access to the saltwater shore. A healthy Puget Sound shoreline will be a valuable resource to future generations, but it depends on interim efforts to improve not only the health of the marine system, but also the freshwater tributaries throughout King County that drain into the Sound. Access to the saltwater shoreline will always be a priority for the public. Water is a recreation magnet and has no equal in recreation planning. Puget Sound is unique to the world and both this and future generations will need improved access to this natural treasure.

TPL recommends that King County DNRP recognize the tremendous natural resource that the Puget Sound shoreline represents and prioritize its protection through acquisitions of targeted high value parcels. Very few of the municipalities interviewed along Puget Sound elevated the shoreline area as a priority for future open space protection. TPL recommends that the theme of marine shoreline conservation be incorporated into future discussions and outreach with communities along the Sound.

5. Open Space and Trail Connections

Parks, trails and protected lands can be strategically located to form physical and functional open space connections across the county's varied landscape. These landscape level connections may support regional trails and provide non-motorized transportation links between communities, physiographic features, and park facilities. TPL recommends that the county and municipalities prioritize improved regional trail connections between regional

parks such as Cougar Mountain, Marymoor, Lake Sammamish, Bridle Trails, Saint Edwards, Greenlake, Discovery Park, Seward Park and Gene Coulon. King County should also identify and acquire additional open space connections that can support upland, wildlife migration corridors. Regional trail and wildlife migration corridors should not be considered mutually exclusive goals, provided that the corridors have the width and other appropriate characteristics to support both.

TPL will be reviewing the *Greenprint for King County* City Priority & Connectivity maps, contained within this report as figures 12 – 17, in a series of follow-up discussions with the municipalities upon the completion of this report. Specific opportunities identified in these conversations to conserve park and open space priorities, as well as community separators, will be communicated back to DNRP.

6. Maintaining the Urban Growth Boundary

Many of the cities contacted as part of this Greenprint's outreach remarked on their appreciation of King County's past efforts to maintain the Urban Growth Boundary, as adopted within the requirements of the Growth Management Act. They stressed their continued interest in working with King County to "hold the line" so that development is directed into the incorporated areas and the rural character preserved outside of the Urban Growth Areas. There are higher value open space and resource lands in the vicinity of the Urban Growth Boundary, as modeled by the *Greenprint for King County* GIS model (figure 19). King County's interest in evaluating strategic acquisitions and other land conservation actions on the rural side of the Urban Growth Boundary could contribute significantly to these shared interests.

Figure 19. Regional Conservation Priority - Maintaining the Urban Growth Boundary (Current Conditions, January 2005)

Support Community Priorities

In addition to filling a primary role as the regional service provider in King County, DNRP also needs to support cities on priorities that are regionally significant, but located within municipalities. These city priorities range from assistance with enforcing the Urban Growth Boundary, to addressing park gaps in communities with rapidly growing populations, to recognizing the need for leadership in addressing the future open space needs of the unincorporated sections of Urban Growth Areas.

1. Address Park Gaps

Many areas of King County, both within and outside of the cities, have tremendous parks, open space, and resource lands. These lands provide not only a valuable service to their neighborhood communities, but many also serve the regional population that values many of the parks enough to use them as destinations they will travel to for day-trip recreation. However, population growth and development pressure threaten to convert the landscape of King County, particularly within and around the cities. Parks are not being created at a pace equal to that of population growth and development, resulting in an increasing number of underserved neighborhoods. Many of the municipalities TPL interviewed requested a greater County role in addressing park gaps for their rapidly expanding populations.

2. Parks and Development in Urban Growth Areas

The local leadership role for cities is clearly recognized in developing parks and open space systems within the incorporated city limits of a municipality. A regional role is recognized for the county in managing the open space and resource lands outside of the UGA. It is less clear whose responsibility it is to ensure that adequate parks and open spaces are protected in the Potential Annexation Areas (PAA), the unincorporated region within the UGA. The county has official land use authority within the unincorporated areas of the UGA, but practically it will be cities responsibility, not the county's, to oversee these areas once they are annexed. There are provisions for cities and counties in Washington to reach special agreements to address their mutual interest in matters such as joint planning within the UGA, agreement over annexation policies, and how development will be permitted.⁴⁷

Not only is there no clear advocate for how the PAAs develop in advance of their eventual annexation, but there is also no funding tied to parks and open space priorities in this zone. King County and the cities could evaluate the potential of generating additional funding, such as:

1. *Real Estate Excise Tax*: Since this tax is generated from real estate transactions, it could be used for acquisitions of real estate in rapidly growing segments of King County, such as the urban growth areas.
2. *Impact fees*: A framework for guiding future development is in place in the unincorporated portions of the UGAs, with zoning standards and the typical permitting

⁴⁷ Municipal Research & Services Center of Washington, MRSC Inquiries: Planning/Community Development: Impact Fees, online at: <<http://www.mrsc.org/askmrsc/Planning.aspx#planning7>>

process as a prerequisite to undertaking new development. By tying future development permitting to the need for additional park and open space acquisitions in the UGAs, funding that could be secured by imposing an impact fee as part of granting future permits. The GMA includes provisions for how cities and counties may have joint agreements overseeing planning in the UGA, and that these agreements may govern how impact fees will be used in the UGAs. One example is how the city of Vancouver and Clark County have adopted an agreement for a coordinated impact fee program.⁴⁸

3. *Countywide bonds and levies:* Future countywide bonds and levies could contemplate addressing the acquisition needs in the UGAs by allocating them a portion of future measures.

Creating community separators in the unincorporated sections of UGAs was another important priority raised by a number of cities in King County. Many cities want to make sure that as they grow -- and as neighboring municipalities grow -- they do not merge into one continuous strip of commercial and residential development. By working with cities on identifying potential parks and open space lands to protect in the PAA, King County can advance the consideration of lands that meet regional priorities or the goals of DNRP programs, offer connections between urban centers and the county's regional parks and trails as contemplated by GMA, and create the buffers desired between growing communities.

Funding

King County has a good policy framework in place to support land conservation. The county has a number of local programs geared exclusively toward land conservation and also has a number of programs where land conservation is an ancillary bonus. The county also participates in a wide array of state and federal land conservation programs, accessing significant funds and matching grants for land protection throughout the county, and it actively promotes incentive programs and tax credit programs to encourage private landowners to preserve the natural condition of their lands. A number of policy changes could further strengthen the county's land conservation framework and increase funds available to protect regional conservation priorities. The following TPL recommendations are intended to serve as a starting point for additional discussions within King County. TPL recommends that King County further explore the viability and practicality of this study's funding recommendations for the purposes of developing longer term and more stable conservation funding strategies.⁴⁹

Funding Priorities

King County has an opportunity to increase alignment between acquisition priorities for programs and natural resource values with specific funding sources. A logical nexus between

⁴⁸ Municipal Research & Services Center of Washington, MRSC Inquiries: Planning/Community Development: Impact Fees, online at: <<http://www.mrsc.org/askmrsc/Planning.aspx#planning7>>

⁴⁹ Note: a much more detailed analysis of King County funding options and recommendations can be found in the stand alone report "King County, Washington, Land Conservation Financing Study" prepared by TPL in August, 2004.

a tax source and its disposition ultimately strengthens public support for a given program area. Earmarking funding sources to logical categories, such as Conservation Futures and WRIA recommendations, excise tax to urban growth areas, property tax levy to regional parks and stewardship create opportunities for better long range planning and implementation of conservation priorities. For example, DNRP could work with the Conservation Futures Citizens Oversight Committee and other funding oversight groups to reach agreement on the priorities for specific funding sources. In addition to increasing alignment between funds and conservation priorities, DNRP will have to work with oversight committees and other decision makers to help ensure that funds are then used for the intended purpose in the future.

The following table (Table 12) illustrates how several of the existing funding sources *might* be aligned with the priorities of different County programs and natural resource values. This matrix is not comprehensive, and is only intended to serve as a starting point for additional discussions within King County about potential alignment of funding sources with conservation objectives, which could then be developed into a conservation finance plan. Any future realignment of funds that might be considered by King County should endeavor to not jeopardize the funding that County programs currently rely on. The overall goal should be to provide stable and sufficient funding for all programs and conservation goals.

Table 12. Conceptual Strategic Funding Matrix

Selection of Funding Strategies	Conservation Categories						
	X= High Priority						
	X= Priority						
	TRAILS	ECOLOGICAL (WRIs)	FORESTS	UGA	PARKS CULTURAL	SHORELINES	MAINTENANCE STEWARDSHIP
Conservation Futures		X	X			X	
Bonds & Levies <i>*King County Levy</i>	X		*X		X	X	*X
REET 1	X			X	X		
REET 2 ⁵⁰							X
IAC WWRP LWCF ALEA SRFB	X	X		X	X	X	
Private Foundations		X			X	X	
Transportation Enhancement	X						
Federal & State Funding <i>*DNR Transfer</i> <i>**Forest Legacy</i> <i>*** Coastal Zone</i>		* X	** X		X	***X	

⁵⁰ REET #2 is currently not legally available for stewardship and maintenance, although there have been past efforts to change this statute to allow use of funds for maintenance.

Selection of Funding Strategies	Conservation Categories						
	X= High Priority x= Priority						
	TRAILS	ECOLOGICAL (WRIAs)	FORESTS	UGA	PARKS CULTURAL	SHORELINES	MAINTENANCE STEWARDSHIP
King County Miscellaneous SSU Flood Hazard Waterways Forestry Capital Budget	X	X	X	X	X		
Impact Fees				X	X		
Mitigation		X					

Additional Funds

Perhaps the most recognizable funding challenge is the limited amount available for acquisition and stewardship. Given the backlog of identified acquisition priorities, either from established initiatives like the WRIA process, WWRP funds at the state level, or from the number of high priority parcels identified by this report's GIS modeling analysis, there is not enough money currently available to purchase the land that needs to be protected in King County. Therefore, new additional funding sources are needed.

Additional capacity does exist for King County's conservation priorities from a number of local state and federal funds. King County has additional debt capacity to tap and could explore an increase to the Conservation Futures property tax or Real Estate Excise Tax levied in the county.

1. Bonds and Levies

Borrowing, by issuing bonds, presents a number of opportunities by providing the county with the revenue and flexibility it needs to fund large-scale park and open space projects while land costs are lower than they will be in the future. Bonds raise substantial amounts of money, enabling King County to make important acquisitions now while the highest value conservation land is available. They ensure an upfront stream of funding that is not dependent on the fluctuations of the operating budget. Costs are typically spread out over time, so that they are borne by both the current and future beneficiaries of the open space and resource lands. In addition, bonds and levies constitute dedicated funds for land and resource protection that are protected from potential changes in priorities during the annual budgeting process.

Convincing voters of the merits of increasing taxes or incurring debt is challenging. For this reason, King County should begin a very deliberate process to craft future bond and levy measures. This process needs to begin with defining and articulating a set of priorities and a vision that illustrates the value of the priorities. Cultivating political support is the next key step, and this requires greater cooperation and communication between the county and cities in the region. TPL's outreach indicated that some cities were unclear about the purpose of the

last levy, and that they desire greater dialogue with the county in shaping future bond or levy measures.

2. Private Funds

There are many private foundations operating in the Northwest, as well as nationally, which have a primary or secondary interest in conserving critical open space and resource lands. Most of these private foundations provide grants only to nonprofit organizations, making public sector agencies like King County ineligible. However, King County should explore working in partnership with nonprofit organizations to access selected private grant and foundation money in support of specific acquisition projects. A list of potential private foundations can be found as an addendum to the Land Conservation Financing Study prepared by TPL, and the potential to partner with conservation nonprofits is discussed in greater detail later in this section.

3. Leverage More State and Federal Funds

The State of Washington and federal government provide funding for land acquisitions with priorities that range from protecting water quality to wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities to agricultural objectives; however, these funds are competitive and not as reliable as local funds. King County and several municipalities have successfully used these funds for an array of past conservation projects. High value conservation projects around King County should continue to compete very well for these state and federal funds.

In addition to leveraging funds from the state and federal governments, King County should evaluate opportunities to meet conservation goals on privately owned land. There are numerous state and federal land conservation programs (i.e. the state Forestry Riparian Easement Program, Riparian Open Space Easement Program, and Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and the federal Wetland Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitats Incentives Program, and Grasslands Reserve Program) that compensate landowners for their voluntary participation. By helping private landowners access these funds for compensation for beneficial land management, King County would be able to meet some of its own conservation goals on privately owned land.

4. Expand and Redirect County Funding Programs

With the exception of funding from the Conservation Futures Tax and Real Estate Excise Tax, at present, all King County land conservation funding programs (i.e. Community Salmon Fund, Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group and WaterWorks) are utilized for the improvement and enhancement of water quality and water-dependent habitat. King County lacks dedicated funding sources for the Community Salmon Fund, Mid-Sound Fisheries Enhancement Group and WaterWorks and these programs have provided limited funding for land acquisition activity in King County. To create more encompassing land conservation programs, King County could leverage additional funds to protect land under the auspices of transportation, urban park, and forestry projects.

5. Stretch Funding Through Creative Transaction Structures

The money allocated for land acquisition by the county can be leveraged more effectively by maximizing the tax benefits to sellers and through the creative legal structuring of transactions, such as bargain sales, charitable remainder trusts, gift annuities, bequests, lease purchases and life estates. In addition there is the increasingly well-known option of purchasing a less-than-fee interest in property where possible, such as with a conservation easement. And there may be significant savings associated with the outright donation of land.

Creative Partnerships

By continuing to work in conjunction with other public entities, other departments/divisions within the county, and private partners, King County can create opportunities to pool funds for land acquisition and stewardship. The Snoqualmie Forest Preservation Agreement and the Cascade Land Treemont Conservation Acquisition Project already serve as models of land preservation achieved through the combined efforts of King County, public partners, and private partners.

There are a host of public and not-for-profit entities that have a direct or tangential interest in acquiring and conserving open space and resource lands. Many of these organizations have the funding and/or expertise to significantly assist King County and the region's communities in meeting their land conservation goals. Opportunities to partner with public utilities, highway departments, state and federal resource agencies, conservation organizations, housing and port authorities and community associations are frequently missed by local and county jurisdictions. There are an increasing number of private park and open space foundations that can be effective partners in pursuing priority acquisitions and meeting stewardship goals.

Nonprofit land trusts are particularly noteworthy potential acquisition partners. These organizations have evolved into sophisticated conservation entities that utilize an arsenal of techniques to acquire and protect open space. These organizations are often trusted and respected by local property owners, skilled in land negotiations and capable of accessing resources not typically available to government entities. Bequests, land exchanges, outright gifts, conservation easements, leasebacks, charitable remainder trusts, life estates, and undivided interests are just a few of the tools used by land trusts to achieve their conservation objectives – many of which offer cost savings compared to fee simple acquisition by a public agency.

There also are ongoing potential alignments with other public agencies, such as the Washington State Department of Transportation, which acquires land for ecological protection as part of its road projects, or with Washington State Department of Natural Resources who shares an interest with King County in protecting the forests of the Cascade foothills from conversion and development. Because there are real opportunities to align acquisition priorities and meet multiple natural resource benefits by partnering with other agencies, King County should continue to explore and leverage these possibilities as part of its overall land conservation efforts.

Communications

One of the clearest needs identified in TPL's outreach discussions with the cities in King County is a desire to have more regular communication with King County. This is true for all levels of King County DNRP staff. Cities want to have a more regular dialogue with DNRP and other County leadership about county level decisions that affect local communities. In particular, there is a great opportunity to generate support for future bonds and levies by consulting cities earlier in the process of designing the measures. Many cities also noted how much they value regular interaction with King County staff that provide technical assistance on open space and resource lands matters. Increased dialogue at both the staff and leadership level could improve trust between some cities and the county.

King County might also benefit from a strong public education and marketing strategy to convey why the county is protecting priority properties that meet regional conservation goals. Several cities did not have strong opinions about the relative importance of regional conservation priorities, such as protecting the forests of the Cascade foothills, major riparian corridors, or shoreline access. Support for local conservation priorities was clearly stronger amongst cities and more informed than at the regional level, where the county's priorities run the risk of being viewed as more abstract.

In order for DNRP to communicate most effectively with the public, it is critical that all DNRP program areas are represented and involved in the development of outreach efforts. However, the Department will benefit from keeping outreach efforts centralized and coordinated by one person or office. This individual or office would be responsible for coordinating input and ensuring that all Divisions are represented, soliciting key activity or special event information from each program area, incorporating this information into an outreach calendar, and then employing a number of outreach strategies to promote activities, inform user groups, engage target audiences and ensure that decision-makers are aware and involved as appropriate.

Cross-Programmatic Coordination

While King County DNRP has been quite successful in its mission delivery, TPL believes that some staffing adjustments could bring tremendous benefits to effectively acquiring and stewarding priority lands. While TPL was not directed to evaluate coordination between the King County DNRP programs as part of TPL's scope for this report, TPL believes the Department should evaluate the potential to reorganize some staff responsibilities so that there is greater coordination among the existing programs, and more cross-programmatic priorities can be identified and pursued. Reorganizing staff responsibilities could result in greater opportunities to coordinate potential acquisitions and stewardship plans for lands that can provide multiple resource values. The Department could also benefit from dedicating staff time to seeking and developing alternative funding sources for projects that address multiple use priorities. King County DNRP could also consider staffing extension positions that would provide acquisition and stewardship technical expertise to cities for regional priorities that cross jurisdictions or are located in cities, such as regional trail connections.

Postscript

The *Greenprint for King County* strategy provides King County with new analytical tools and results to better understand physical landscape and natural resource conservation needs and opportunities. King County will continue to use these dynamic analytical tools to inform its open space and resource lands acquisition and conservation decision-making. As new data sets and regional priorities emerge, King County DNRP will adjust the GIS models accordingly. Continued use of these analytical tools will help ensure that limited resources are directed to the highest priority lands, so that King County can continue to fulfill its mission to be the regional steward of the environment while strengthening sustainable communities.

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